

CLOSE UP

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AS IS

BY THE EDITOR.

The Film Till Now,* dedicated "to those among cinema audiences who wonder why and think how", is in several ways a significant book, chiefly, perhaps, in that, bearing such a dedication, it could not have achieved its purpose until now, when everyone who wonders why or thinks how knows his *Close Up*, and has become familiar with the kino jargon of those who are trying to make words fit the expression of so different a medium. A medium far beyond words—and that is why any book, any writing on cinema craft, technique or art, must leave restlessness and a sense of incompleteness at the last. *The Film Till Now* is essentially a modern book, a book of "right now", though—as must almost inevitably happen in the business of going to press, proof reading and final organisations, time elapses, and to-day's last development is left behind. We must realise, therefore, that although most of the films mentioned as the

* By Paul Rotha. Jonathan Cape. 10s. 6d. net.

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latest works of various directors are of recent date, many of their makers have had time since the book was written to finish one or two more—a bewildering state of affairs, since, as we all know, a director's most recent film has an odd way of cancelling his former efforts. It is bound to remain his one really essential expression—until his next!

Mr. Rotha has made an impressive show and a gallant one. There are books, and they may be good, but the publishers' craft is to make them *inviting*. As with houses, the test of their quality will finally remain simply this: either you are tempted to go in and explore, or repelled by what you think the inside will be like. So also with books. There are ways of binding that could poison the best book in the world. *The Film Till Now*, thank goodness, is a pleasant book to handle, and that is a more important thing than is fully realised.

It is divided into two parts with appendices. The first part is concerned with the Actual, the second with the Theoretical. Opening with a general history of the film and the forms of cinema, we come to a consideration of the films of several countries. Three chapters on the American film. One each on the Soviet, the German, the French and the British film, and one chapter on films from other countries, including Sweden (about which too little is said, for its history has been one of the determining factors of the cinema, not of to-day perhaps, the more assuredly then of to-morrow,) and Japan, which has three paragraphs, indicating that the author is less concerned with it than Eisenstein. Italy, Spain and India are mentioned.

In this first part of the book lies some admirable material.

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Undoubtedly this section is going to be the more popular of the two. Mr. Rotha's investigation of the American cinema is thorough and astute. There is an excellent summary of von Stroheim and his work. The concluding words are: "Stroheim, as a director, has given much to the cinema in an indirect and obscure manner. Stroheim as an actor is always a source of interest. Stroheim as a cinematic genius is not to be countenanced."

The more surprising, therefore, is the author's acclamation of Chaplin as the supreme artist, enduring "the aching pain of loveliness", "an unhappy, disconsolate and lonely man". What is this ability to believe without one single, even momentary uncertainty? Can Chaplin do no wrong? And why has the author acclaimed *The Circus*, a trite and shoddy film, without construction and factory-made in its every emotion, as "one of the greatest tragedies in the history of the film, and yet . . . magnificently funny."? When shall we have the investigation of this clever man and his cult?

In all that will to pathos is only a form of psychic cheating. For pathos, a lechery of the inert, the willingness to pity, so often the betrayal of inner softness, is nearly always a washer-woman's joy, a pub-crawl state of moral wiseacre-ing. Do we have to admire this, or is it not a form of solitary vice?

Chaplin has been more perfect when he has not been seeking these "greatest tragedies." Then strip him of pathos and there's something elfin. Something of Ariel, a wisp of a fellow . . . something, alas, of a proletarian Peter Pan.

Chaplin as the director of *A Woman of Paris* is a different consideration. Much more consolidated, and much less coy.

However, perhaps it is not his appreciation of Chaplin

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that will cost Mr. Rotha's readers pangs of disagreement, but the chapter on Soviet films. This chapter begins with a contention that the Soviet film has been largely over-rated . . . the reason being that " content (social and political) may be swallowed in the temporary admiration of the method " . . . " in hasty admiration of perfect technique, it is easy to accept content, theme and meaning without thought as to their full intention " . . . Is it possible that Mr. Rotha assumes that a " perfect technique " could move anybody to accept anything unless it were a technique flowing toward and enclosing as well as enclosed by its thematic content?

The vigorous technique of the best Soviet directors would be banal and idiotic in any but an intensely social, intensely controversial theme. Why be afraid of controversy? Why be afraid of the content? A well-filmed murder would be more or less unlikely to drive its audience into the streets, a mob of cut-throat desperados, no matter how inviting the murder or auspicious its results. The films that make ladies weep are forgotten in a wreath of smiles. The Soviet films are, in a sense, thundering and radiant proclamations, and the accused " young *cinéastes* " cannot be blamed for accepting content, if that content is the vigorous clap of reality, a slapping of pungent red blood into the anæmic veins of mild erotic matter they have lived on. Social consequences have little place in æsthetic experience, at least the author would have us believe so when he states that " even the iron rule of a Soviet *régime* cannot suppress the birth and development of an instinctively creative mind," which indicates an attitude in favour of art for art's sake, which is what old people used to say was *fin de siècle*.

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However this may be, there is something akin to a shyness in Mr. Rotha's approach to the Soviet film. It would be hard to discover what it is that worries him. Distortion? But we have enough of that in our eternal nagging round the throne of Sex Appeal. Licence? Fumbling?

"The exclusion of Trotsky in Eisenstein's *October* (*Ten Days*), renders it valueless as an historical document." Surely it was the author's function, unless he was in ignorance of the fact, to point out that originally the film contained sequences to the length of a reel or more, in which Trotsky was featured, and of which the trembling crystal chandeliers were part, and that the mutilation took place later and almost wholly in Germany? When Eisenstein was in Berlin last fall he spent an aggrieved ten minutes describing these mutilations, and his non-recognition of "the chaos that was once my film" when he saw it projected there. *Ten Days* as shown in Germany and other countries, including England, was a parody of the original film, as with *Potemkin* in—was it Holland?—where the film ended with the massacre on the steps, thus revealing to a chastened public what would happen to them if they tried any monkey tricks. There you have a glimpse of the "instinctively creative mind" which cannot be suppressed. *Instinctively?* Well, Eisenstein, it was, who said "Down with instinctive creation"!

Mr. Rotha is very good on his summings-up. Albeit a little 'igh' an' mighty. Directors and films are swept into martial array and martial precision, of which the author is a little too patently the commander. There is a touch of the subaltern on parade. In other words, we are made to feel now and then that the material under discussion is not treated

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intrinsically but in mass formation. Not in the analyses, however, only in the summaries, so that a little "mass formation" is inevitable, though its militant dismissals are apt to leave too much unsaid.

In his chapter on the German film, Mr. Rotha shows an appreciative understanding. Passing from an historical outline of the development and decline of the great German period, he approaches a survey of the outstanding directors, of whom Pabst heads the list, to be followed by examinations of the work of Fritz Lang, and of Czinner, to whom he has been over-generous, Czinner remaining suspect now and forever because of what he did in Great Britain when he filmed Pola Negri. Murnau, Berger, Robison, Grune, Galeen, Leni, Pick, and Fanck complete the list. It would have been gratifying to have found some little study of the work of Hans Schwarz, considered in Germany as the most important of the popular modern directors, of Ucicky, who also makes films for Erich Pommer, and of Joe May. These men are the privileged, and if their work is often trivial, with them lies the present and some of the future of the *sprechie*.

In the chapter on French films, are kindly words for the *avant garde* experimentalist. A *bon bouche* for which some struggling young men will be glad and perhaps sustained. It is just as well. *Avant garde* has never been just that, has always been belied by its name. Actually *avant garde* is probably only a hint here and there for a few to see in the films of the best among us, not in the tentative "side-shows" of restricted independents. That, no doubt, we all realise, but it is nice to find Mr. Rotha at least not snubbing the young. Not they alone will be appreciative.

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A meaty chapter, this. Think of it. Sorting out the French cinema! Fragments. Tangle. Laurels to the author for his manipulation. And ungracious surely to snap at random "Marcel l'Herbier is *not* the 'supreme technician of the French cinema'!" Think of his gross and awkward bungling of *l'Argent*, that leering and dissolute camera, those sets, that Helm, that inordinate fussiness of assembly of manner and content. No, l'Herbier, certainly not . . . but there you are! There's a quibble on every page if you feel like it. That is perhaps proof of merit? Certainly, however, when you turn the page and read of Gance's drivelling and pompous *Napoleon* that "it was tediously cumbersome and hopelessly overweighted with symbolic reference" you may say "And same to *l'Argent*!" and be done with it.

Finally, England. What there is to say Mr. Rotha says. It is what anybody would have to say. But the sheet anchor, to use the author's own expression, of the British Film Industry is the *Secrets of Nature* series by British Instructional. Mr. Rotha is tolerant but not very hopeful. There are eight pages to the chapter as against thirty-three to the German one. Hitchcock, Asquith and Grierson are the names that emerge.

Turning to the second part of the book, the first chapters on the aim of the film in general, and "the preconception of Dramatic Content" will be instructive and enlightening. Do not forget we are dealing with film Theory now. Instruction will be available specially to those "who wonder why and think how." It is not a too easy task going back to the beginning and educating from there toward advanced comprehension. "When it is grasped that the formation of a

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scene or situation in a film is purely a matter of the constructive editing of visual images, then it will be seen that the film director creates his own time, as well as his own space." That is a pretty far step from "all art . . . has at base the same motive, which may be said to be the creation of a work in the presence of which an observer or listener will experience either pleasure or pain as the mood of the work demands." It is possible that these latter chapters will be a little beyond the grasp—or, shall we say the will to grasp—of the average reader. To the initiate they are orderly, level-headed, and, above all, composed simply, and following mainroads without digression into the esoteric and psychic mazes that too concentrated theorizing is apt to lead one into.

However, even the rawest novice will be able to pluck forth enrichment that will help him with his future films. He will start looking for the "indirect suggestion" that creates psychology.

On the whole, in spite of the exceptions we have perhaps too churlishly taken, this is a praiseworthy and conscientious work. There are excellent appendices. And the illustrations are numerous and well reproduced.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

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MOVIE : NEW YORK NOTES

I have had a season of American film-seeing-hearing and I can say that the U.S.A. cinema remains where it was. The revue film came in and has gone out. It used some stunts brought in by a lesser foreigner, Marcel Silver, among others, and they have remained and died as stunts, never once entering into the mind of the movie, as that mind expresses itself in its structural interests. Dance combinations showed virtuoso skill, especially those organized by David Bennett.

The good-bad-man of the underworld has been having his vocal period in films awkward and an occasionally smooth one, *Street of Chance*. The Lingle murder in Chicago is anticipated in *Roadhouse Nights*, not a bad job, but a little haphazard. Excellent organization of scenes is evinced by director Henry King in *Hell Harbor* for a pseudo-Conrad picture on the "dangerous paradise" motive—we've had a run of that too.

War films : *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*, *Journey's End*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. I've spoken about these in the New Masses for June.

Prison films, reflecting the times childishly, now are coming forth. I have seen two : *Shadow of the Law* and

Numbered Men. The former has the usual Paramount competence at the beginning, but fades out before half-way. The latter is wretched in the typical Warner Brothers' (First National) indifference toward dramatic values, characterization, fluency, the elementary job-qualities.

The only American films that are generally sufferable are the light-hearted comedies without high pitch of drama, and never seeking more than the idyllic. *Young Man from Manhattan* becomes, despite an original germ of "human interest", another one of these passing frivolities, and I am thankful to Monta Bell he kept the picture at its level of youthfulness, and did not attempt to make it a "picture of American life", which King Vidor might have tried to do with it. Paramount can get as far as a good job with "passing frivolities", and that is more than can be said for most of the other companies. In the revue-operetta class, Paramount certainly excels. Metro has been, on the whole, very weak in this type of production. I prefer the light tonal quality of a Paramount film to that of, let us say, a Metro, with its penchant for European blacks. Paramount's grays have the matter-of-fact cleanliness suitable to the American film. Sometimes we find a let-down here too. *The Big Pond* was tonally impure, as was also *Innocents of Paris*. They reflect the entire failure of the Chevalier films, a dependence upon a personality that is pleasant, energetic, but not incisive. Chevalier was capable in *The Big Pond*, but the film was kept simperingly gay instead of allowed to become satirical (if not trenchantly so), as the content implied. *Innocents of Paris* is one of the worst films on record, with its crowded scenes and speech, unbalanced, oversentimentalized,

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the usual offensive child-portrayal of the American film. I am not surprised to find that its director, Richard Wallace, is responsible for *Seven Days' Leave*. I suppose the name of Wallace won him the direction of the Barrie story. How any grown person can write such a fable, and how any grown person can enjoy it, would be a mystery if one did not know the horrible sentimentalism that inhabits mature bodies.

* * *

Why was *Seven Days' Leave* praised? It was such a sweet story. Imagine the stomach that can endure sweet stories that sympathize with an idiotic old lady (a scrub-woman, of course—chivalrous kingdom of gentlemen!) who would have a lad killed for her own pride. The fact that there was no girl-and-boy romance, that old ladies made up the story, affected the critical faculties of the commentators to panegyric. Horrible cute old Beryl Mercer! She was just as simperingly Scotch (if her portrayal is not only Scotch out of Barrie and Hollywood) in *All Quiet*. A static film with as little mobility as *Journey's End*, to which it is not unrelated in its Britishers' attitude toward the "lower classes."

How can anyone believe in the sentiments of those who accept the pacifism of the war-films mentioned and the romanticism of *Seven Days' Leave*? The answer is plain: pacifism is itself uncritical romanticism, sentimentalism, and it has nothing to do with the actual condemnation of war for its real character. This would imply a criticism, even a negation, of present economic society, and the romanticists would not yield to that.

And Welford Beaton recommends Carl Laemmle for the Nobel Peace Prize on the strength of *All Quiet*? Why not?

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Was it not bestowed upon Theodore Roosevelt, the biggest peace-bluff of all? It doesn't contradict the spirit of peace prizes that Laemmle is president of the company that made some years ago a film called *The Kaiser, the Beast of Berlin*. And that jingoist fragments are conspicuous in Universal newsreels as in all other "actualities."

* * *

The most interesting of American films that I have seen of late is an industrial, publicity picture, *Business in Great Waters*, of the laying of the Western Electric high-speed cable between Newfoundland and the Azores. The director, Charles Darrell, and photographer, Walter Pritchard, executed no ultra-brilliant conversion of an engrossing, if didactic, narrative—but held to a diligent straightforward record of the enterprise. A very good workman directed, and a photographer who could "shoot" the thing before him, above him and beneath him, sustained an exciting picture in the sequence and light-tonality. Animated drawings added to the tension and interest of the picture, as did the map in *Turksib*. The synchronization disturbed the film. The vocal description of the work maintained an even, moderately inflected tone, but the language and verbal "stretching" rose above the temper of the visual movie, which told the tale unaided. The major offense of the synchronization was the insertion of sea-chanteys into a straightforward, unfabricated account.

* * *

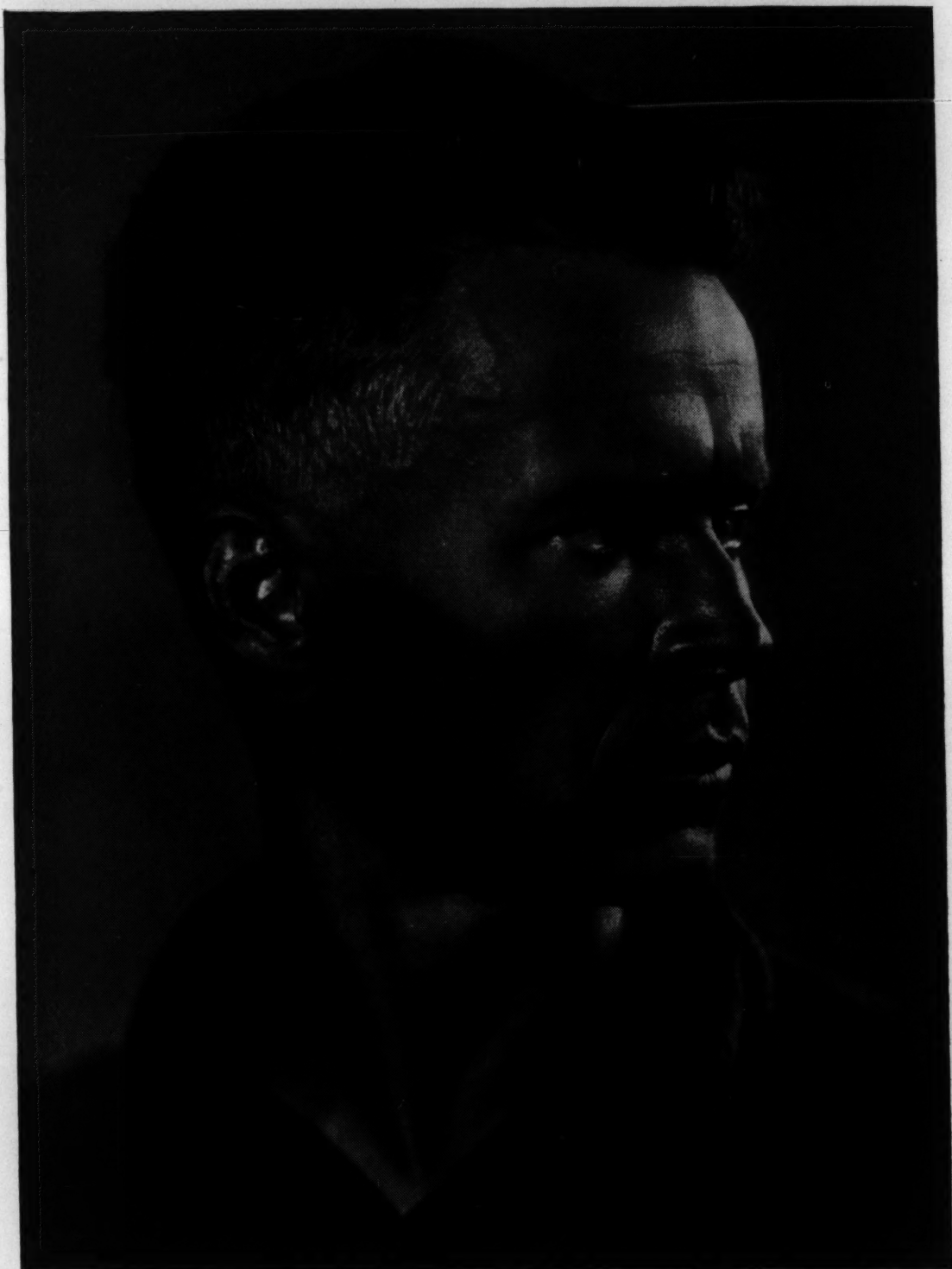
Where is the amateur film during these accumulations? The amateur in America, like the amateur in England, has generally an exaggerated interest in the film. By exagger-



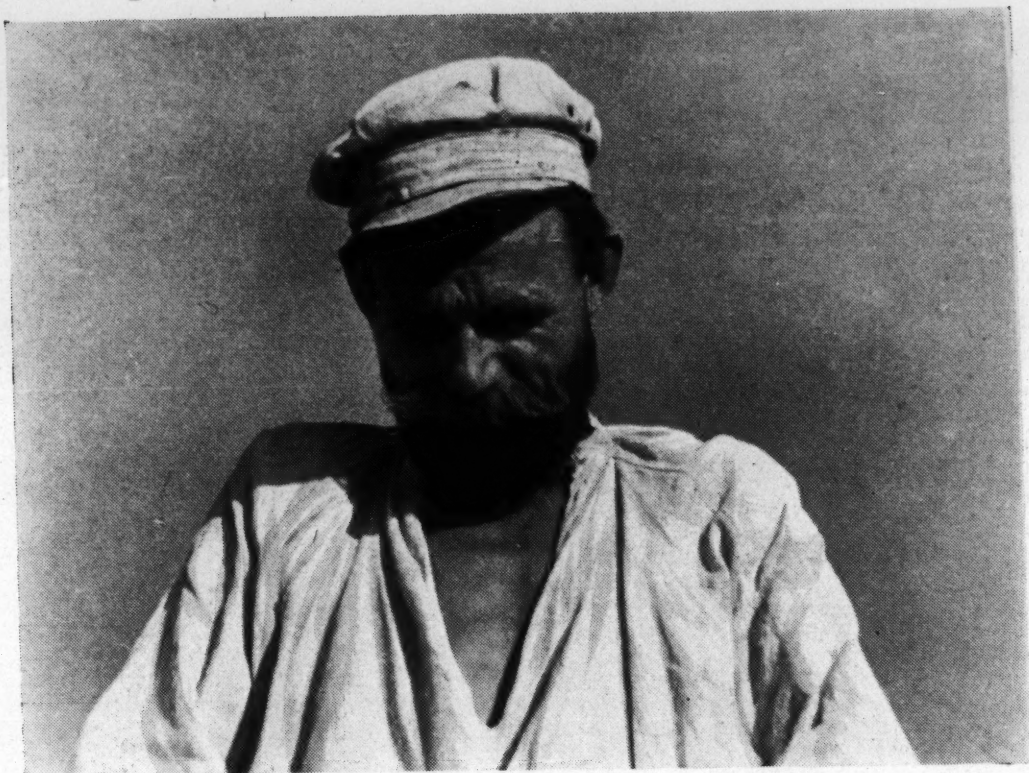
From *The Sovhoz Giant*, a documentary film directed by L. Stepanova for Sovkino.



From *The Silent Don*, Olga Preobrashenskaya's new film. Tzessarskaya, who played a memorable part in *The Women of Riazan* is the leading lady, seen in the above still.



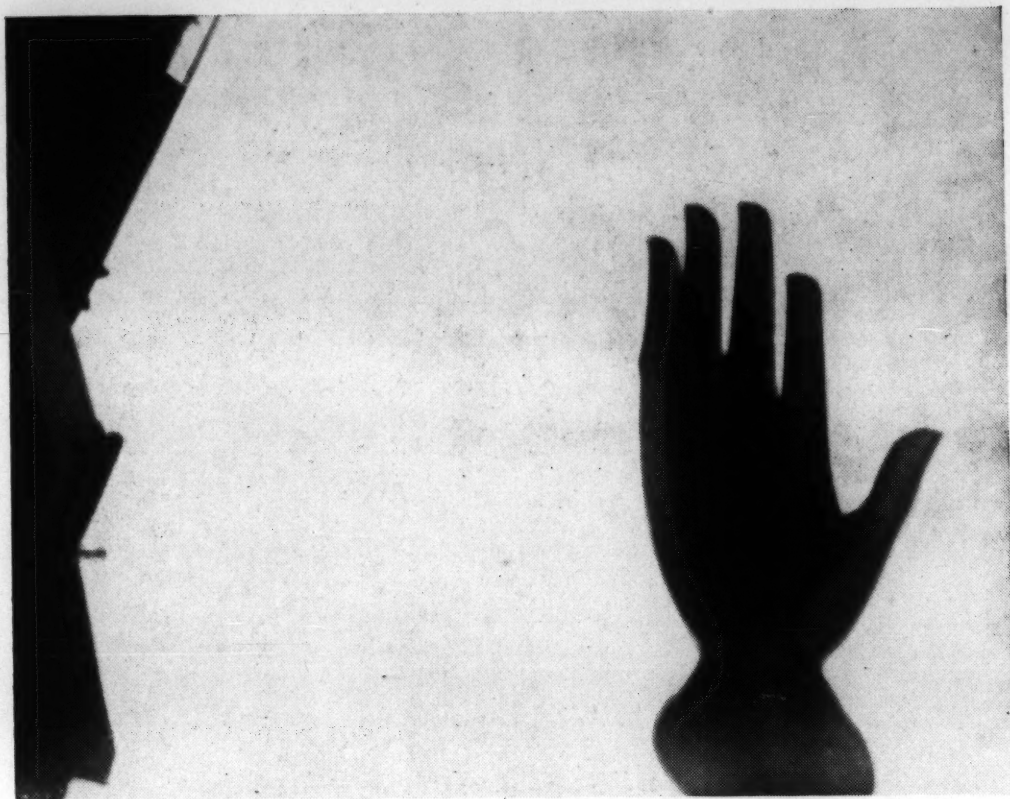
Alexandre Dovshenko, the brilliant director of several Wufku productions. His latest film *Earth* will be shown during the Film Society's coming season.



From *Earth*, Dovshenko's new film.



Hel-Yemen, an ethnographical film made by V. Scherderoff for Meshrapom-Film. Two Jewish boys.



Two studies from the new film by Eugen Deslaw, the final title has not yet been chosen. The name at present is *Etude sur le Robotisme*. It will shortly be presented at the Studio 28.





From Doctor Arnold Fanck's new film, made for Aafa, featuring Leni Riefenstahl, the heroine of *Pitz Palu*. It is entitled *Storm on the Mountain*.



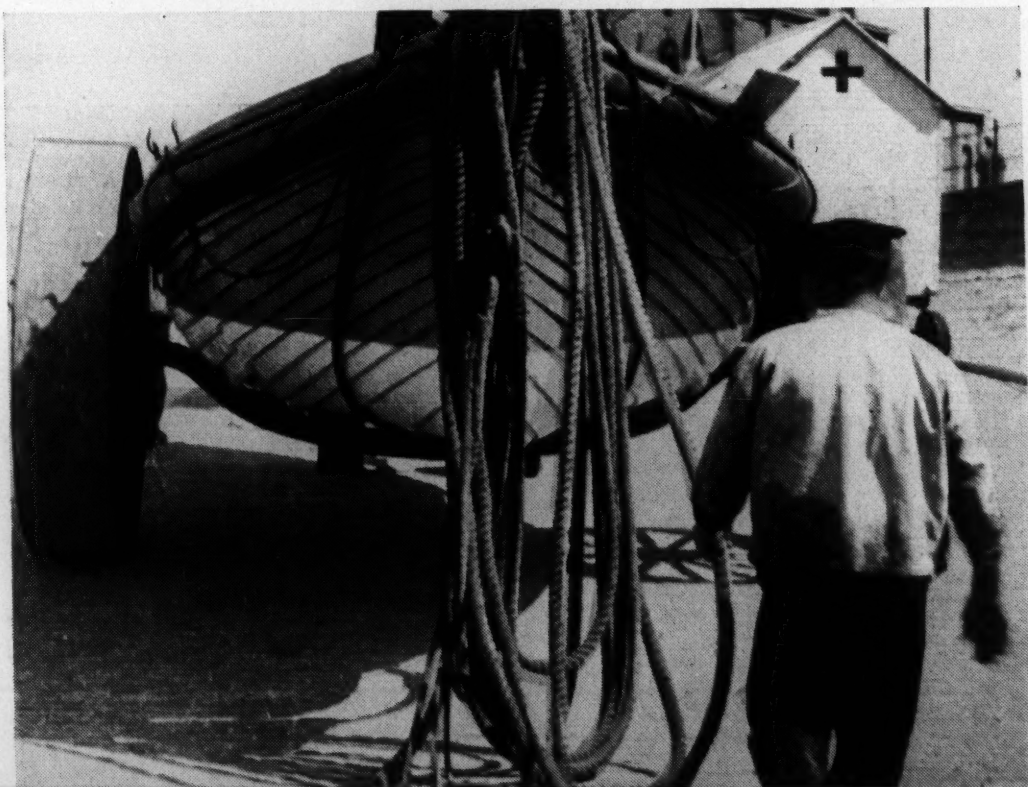


From *Physiopolis*, made by Georges O'Messerly and Jean Dreville—a study in Naturism, taken at the French naturists' camp at Villennes-sur-Seine. This film will also be presented during the winter season.





Doctor Durville, the chief of the Naturist School in France.



From a new Documentaire by Henri Storck, of the Ostend Cine-Club, dealing with the experiences and routine of the Belgian life-boat-men.



From the documentaire of the lifeboat-men of the Belgian coasts,
made by Henri Storck.



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ated I mean that he thinks of his relation to the movie as something which passes beyond the limits of amateurism. He has his eye on the large-scale film. He mimics it, is nostalgic for it, and organizes his groups pompously for the exploitation of his personality and personalities like his. Therefore his films are egregiously histrionic. I recall during my visit to England being made aware of groups with studio-divisions and sub-divisions. I recall a number of terrifying imitations of Sennett and Fritz Lang. In America Eastman Kodak has circulated a "model" film, *Fly Low Jack and Play the Game*, in which the hero runs through a series of sports in William Haines fashion. For these amateurs Marion Norris Gleason has written a book, *Scenario Writing and Producing for the Amateur*, with an introduction by C. E. Kenneth Mees, D.Sc., Hon. F.R.P.S. (Boston: American Photographic Publishing Co.). As Dr. Mees says: "This book has been written to provide a simple and clear account of the construction of a motion picture as a drama. It should be both interesting and valuable to the rapidly increasing army of cinematographers." It is not a bad book of its kind, but it serves the egregious histrionic movie-amateur, and as such it is entirely too esoteric for me, who thinks of amateurism as an interest in the intrinsic film and film as social document. The author has some good instincts, visible in this quotation: "As to the limitations of amateur productions, don't worry about them unless they are very obvious. Limitations often turn out to be creative stimulants; witness the two-by-four stage of the Provincetown Players and their significant contributions to our national theatre. And in the realm of the motion picture amateur, one of the best contributions yet

made to the art of cinematography in this country, Dr. Watson's *Fall of the House of Usher* was produced in a stable fitted with homemade sets and contraptions." There is some good elementary advice, but the chapter-headings will indicate that the author is concerned more with the expression of individuals acting than in the discovery of authentic material, the development of correct attitudes toward social subject-matter, and the cultivation of the aesthetic sincerities:

1. Dramatic Construction of a Scenario.
2. Writing the Scenario Continuity with examples of tedious film-narratives.
3. The Home Movie with similar examples.
4. Children's Scenarios, as original as Rip Van Winkle (never asking just what is legitimate child-in-film stuff).
5. Holiday Scenarios (isn't this social settlement stuff?).
6. Scenarios for Organized Groups.
7. The Experimental Field.
8. Directing Amateur Motion Picture Production.

Chapter 7 on The Experimental Field begins: "It is far outside my province to suggest how the experimenters are to experiment or what the pioneers are to discover." Which aren't the same thing: experiment and discovery. "The whole interest of an experiment lies in the fact that the result is uncertain; the whole adventure of exploring is just that one doesn't know what lies ahead." The trouble here is the author made the typical error of talking about experiment, when she would have done better to talk about principles and variety of cinema kinds. As a matter of fact, she begins to have an inkling of the correct sobriety when she writes: "It is he (the amateur), and not the professional, who is going to put the scenario into its right place—the foremost place that it must have in any great art, or in any real art. After all, it is Shakespeare, not

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Richard Mansfield. . . .” “Scenario-conception” the author says she means, meaning “the message,” “the gist,” “the idea,” not “story-scenario” merely. One would not have known that by her scenario examples. There are scenarios for a talkie and a color film, again not statements of principles to be enacted, but stories to be acted. Not a word or suggestion of the method of cinema unity called “montage.” If the author had really thought through what is meant by “scenario-conception” she would have realized that the amateurs to whom her book would go and appeal could not make use of a “conception,” for that demands a point of view. The amateur with “conception” will appear among the social-minded, not among the country-club-minded, tea-party amateur of the Gleason society.

* * *

In the June 1930 *Close Up*—in an article written a year previously—I suggested that “the cinema is not so remote from the theatre as dogmatists insist. The cinema has a source in the theatre, the theatre has a source in the cinema.” Eisenstein called the motion picture a stage in the development of the theatre. He did not mean that the movie had no character of its own. It is, he believes—as I do with him—a part of the historical continuity of the “show”—the popular amusement. The movie did not defeat the theatre. The latter, as a popular form, is now at its minimum; the movie, as a popular form, is at its maximum. But a form must pass from the rudimentary to the realised, from the popular to the elite, from the ritual to the art. The movie, in its international evolution as cinema, has passed out of the rudimen-

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tary. In America it is held at the rudimentary because of the repression of the vital energies that will propel it.

* * *

The first American writers upon the film wrote against it, just as the first writers of the sound film wrote against it as an interloper. In either case the opposition was prompted by a defense of a seemingly threatened art. Walter Pritchard Eaton in 1909 called the movie "canned drama." Other descriptions were: "moving-pictures ad nauseam" (1908); "nickel madness" (1907); "startling development of the bi-dimensional theatre" (1909); "silent stage." (1909). Carl Van Vechten characterized it as "the electrical theatre." The commentators could not see beyond the film's character as a "nickelodeon" (1908) or a "nickel theatre" (1911). The chief preoccupation was a moral one: how would the child be affected? Or a protective one: the "theatre's new rival" (1909). In 1910 Horace M. Kallen wrote the first piece of real film-criticism. It appeared in the Harvard Monthly, and strange to say a good deal of our movie-commentary has since issued from the academic precincts of Harvard University. Professor Hugo Munsterberg wrote his book, *The Photoplay* (1916). The New Republic, as early as 1915, published an article by Harold Stearns on the films. Kenneth MacGowan was called, in 1917, "the first film critic in America"—he wrote for the Seven Arts Magazine. Alfred Kuttner, the only one of these writers to retain an active interest in the cinema, wrote also for the New Republic, as did also Gilbert Seldes, another Harvard johnny.

Kallen wrote of the film as a part of the historic continuity of the popular theatre, but was at the same time able to extract

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the distinct qualities of the new form, namely, "concentration and expressiveness."* He, however, inherited the academic limitation of seeing processes as terminated things at the moment of inspection, rather than as forms in evolution. The movie has had few critics who have seen it as a form in evolution. Of all who have written in English, Alexander Bakshy alone has been perspicacious. Kallen could not see the film beyond its rudiments in the melodrama and "churlish comedy."† His attitude was snobbish, patrician, but not inaccurate for the time. The "primitive phenomenon" of the film was as Kallen saw it. He said: "The rival of the musical comedy has appeared and with it a totally new and

* Kallen saw as another distinct characteristic of the movie "rapidity of movement." By this he evidently meant "speed." Critics have insisted upon "speed" as an essential of the film—it is a quality of the "primitive phenomenon." Another characteristic he designated was the "dominant æsthetic paradox," the customary in unaccustomed media. This may be looked upon in two ways: through the eyes of 1910, as seeing the new art treating of the materials of the old and, by this juxtaposition creating an "æsthetic surprise"; or, through the constant eyes of art, as seeing in the film a means of disturbing dessicate logic, in the sense that Eisenstein speaks of the "pathetic treatment of non-pathetic material." So that Kallen has listed three categories of principles: the law of art, the law of the cinema, the law of the film's first form.

† The 1910 attitude toward comedy in the cinema is shared by the German, Professor Konrad Lange, who said in address (1912) before the Dürer Bund in Tübingen that the comic or grotesque film depended entirely upon eccentricity. It could not be compared, he said, to the art of the circus-clown, for the latter spoke once-in-a-while and uttered witty remarks. (It is then the circus-clown is least the artist.) Chaplin had not yet appeared by 1912 to disprove the charge that the film could not carry wit. Both Kallen and Lange saw speechlessness as an obstacle to anything but churlishness in the comic film. To Lange the comic film was a "Schundfilm"—rubbish-film; its humor "Hampelmannhumor," jumping-jack humor. He must have had in mind Mack Sennett's Keystone Kops and Ford Sterling. They were basic, folk jesters.

unexpected force in the theatre, a force that may have enormous power for dramatic good and evil, a force that will moderate and perhaps re-establish on its pristine eminence, the discarded and abased melodrama." Kallen's preoccupation with the pristine was not altogether altruistic—æsthetic that is to say; it was aristocratic, defensive. He wanted the mass to be kept from speculation, for if it were not, something might ensue, something dreadful, like a revolution. This may have been but the aloof air of a young man, but it has served as a principle in the film-industry. The movie has been a fairy-tale and has had its existence as a compensatory mythology. Only a new social mind can stir it to actuality and positive experience.

* * *

The mythological nature of the American movie becomes hideous in the instance when social turbulences are the subject-content. M-G-M has just issued *The Big House*, "inspired" by the recent prison-riots. Since this is the best of the films that followed these explosions it offers the most advantageous of opportunities. Here is certainly a social material. What does it reveal?

The film begins within the prison, begins, that is to say, with a promise of *intensiveness*. But to sustain the intensive there is required a disciplined and rigorous mind, which is not the mind of the American movie. The intensiveness is one of theme and structure. To assure such sustained intensiveness only one thing could suffice: conception. A conception of the theme is lacking. The intensiveness of locale is not maintained. The thief, Morgan, escapes from the infirmary. The story follows him into the city, the bookshop

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of the heroine, the heroine's home. The intensiveness is *relieved*. *Relief* is a constant in the American formula. Not the relief which enhances the tragedy, or the criticism, but which neutralizes it. 'There is further relief in the whimsicality of the machine-gun murderer, Butch, who commits an offense, only to say "I was only kiddin'." With these words he dies after he has attempted to kill his pal, Morgan, whom he has wrongly suspected of squealing. The winsome pathos of hard men. There is much winsomely pathetic relief in Butch's pretended reading of a letter—which he says came from a girl crazy over him—but which Morgan deciphers for the illiterate gangster as the announcement of his mother's death. Sob-hokum according to formula. And the film offers no relief from that.

The burden of the guilt is shifted. The warden forebodingly complains of overcrowding. The film does not convey the sense of that. The film-directors hope to have the dialogue carry the charge, but only the unit-film is vehicle. (The same failure characterized *All Quiet*.) The warden speaks of 3,000 idle men, brooding. They seemed to be having a charming time of it, even though the jailers were tough. They had a cockroach race (see *Journey's End*) which ended in a fight between Butch and Morgan: but that's the holiday spirit, heroics. The genial guard (there must be one such) warns against putting the boy—in for ten years because of running down a man while drunk—with the hardened Butch and Morgan. These are only verbal statements. They do not create, as they should, the basis for the informing *temper*. When Butch, revolted by the food, explodes, provoking the outburst of 3,000 men and his own solitary confinement, the

literalness of the director is apparent. We should be convinced, not by Butch's explosion (which is simply a crude statement, coming from one we should hardly expect to rebel at bad food), but by the food itself; just as the maggotty meat in *Potemkin* was the explanation and argument of the revolt.†

These are the accusations. But the burden of the guilt is shifted from the prison to the individual, the boy who frames Morgan. Factually, the prison seems to have provided the boy with the instigation to stool-pigeonry. Factually, I say, for though the warden deplores such method, the film does not convey the sense of the social guilt involved in such provocation. The boy is the guilty one. And he is redeemed twice: by his own death in the riot caused by his revealing of the plan to escape and by the stupendous consequence of his framing of Morgan. If he hadn't framed Morgan, Morgan would not have been put into the dungeon, from which he was released feigning illness, to escape from the infirmary. Morgan would not then have called on the boy's sister to wreak vengeance, the two would not have fallen in love, Morgan would not have returned to the prison determined to go straight, would not have saved the prison-guards from massacre, and been pardoned into his sweetheart's arms, which await him outside the gate before a hedge of flowers

† To show the international content of American dungeons, *The Big House* includes all the nationalities. These are present in ridicule, the short, baldheaded Jew in spectacles grimacing and twisting his jargon to amuse the customers. This is churlishness in the wrong place. The Swede, portrayed as a stupid loose-jawed glutton by Karl Dane, swills himself on the food which the fastidious Butch discredits. Butch evidently is more refined than his patent idiocy allows. Really, this is much too complicated for simple minds.

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and a sedan. The guilt, whose burden has been shifted from society, vanishes completely.

* * *

Those who believe the true æsthetic attitude is to separate the form from the content will not like my treatment. But the content provides the form by *informing* the structure. An heroic form cannot be constructed of a frivolous content. *The Big House* is shop-competence which, not urged toward scrutiny, does not attempt the instrumental uses which only scrutiny provokes. The intensiveness is not sustained because there was not the mind to sustain it. The approach was frivolous, facetious . . . and the result is not even physically exciting. The mess-room explosion and the riot are too recognizably the elementary formula to excite a reaction or tension. It is all too plausible. Scenes that should be poignant, like the boy's entrance into the supply-department for his prison-garb, provoke snickers. Guffaws are very generous in the audience. The mind of the film and the mind of the audience coincide, it is the mind of that section of America which created the film.

* * *

There is another type of film which is now in vogue. The film of the "restless rich," provided by the popular play and novel. The latest of these is *Holiday*, and since it has most efficiently, all the qualities typical of this sort of film, it is worth looking at. *Holiday* is from the play by Philip Barry, a Harvard 47 Workshop product. It treats of the ineffably rich, about which movie audiences read a lot, but who are no more than invidious creatures of mythology. America's experience of them is a vicarious experience.

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Edward H. Griffith is the director of the picture. His *Paris Bound* was another such. Mr. Griffith possesses style. That is an aristocratic virtue, but not a profound one. It is suited to this kind of film, the kind that supposes the narrative of the entanglements of the oppressed rich is a social problem—the problem of art. Of course, such a narrative, penetrated to the social core and referred to the complete motivating process of structure, might become a revelation of society. Henry James approached that, Edith Wharton was less close to it—usually the product of the environment of which the narrative deals has not felt any process organically enough to do more than narrate the story of some individuals within a certain area. The effect is generally of a fabrication, and that is the effect of *Holiday*—veneered, suave, civilized—as that word is used by the people blessed with remoteness and unconcern. The film remains a literary story, a parlor play—it depends wholly upon the actors—and these must not go out of the drawing-room. Smart lines must follow upon each other . . . the gaiety, is it? of the nations, their aristocracy, of course. I can see the wife of the shopkeeper, the twenty-year man-of-the-world (though born of the people), and even the mill-dolly revelling in this whiff from a romantic world. They whiffed it in *The Laughing Lady*, in *Paris Bound*, in *This Thing Called Love* . . . less crude than Clara Bow in *Love Among the Millionaires* . . . and therefore all the more to 'ware of.

I have spoken of processes. Montage is a process. Films like *Turksib* and *Joan of Arc* are processes. The process of the film is, in its evolution toward realization, in the opposite direction from the theatre's development. The theatre is an in-

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tensive medium aspiring to progressiveness. *The cinema is a progressive medium aspiring to intensiveness.* The film came into being when the theatre had reached as far as it could in its progress toward progressiveness—the latter sought to further *cinematize* itself. At this point the two came closest together.

* * *

The failure to recognise the method of montage as an integral process is the explanation of the sad attempts to sovietize films outside of the U.S.S.R. I have had the opportunity of seeing Grierson's *Drifters* at last; and it is the immediate provocation for my statement.

The zeal of the British, and Mr. Grierson himself, have been unfair to *Drifters*. The film does not deserve the anticipation the English comments have caused. As a first job of a young man, it is commendable. As an example of cinematic art, it is far from meritorious. Grierson has said he derived the *energies* of his film from the U.S.A. cinema, the *intimacies* from that of the U.S.S.R. If these could be joined together, the result would be hybrid. Why did Mr. Grierson not seek his energies also in the Soviet kino? Montage is an expression of the energies as well as of the intimacies. That is to say montage is the progression and the intensive unit. Moreover, I suspect that Grierson has defined energies as muscular impact. The American film is a film of muscular impact. It cannot be said to contain anything so plural as energies, for the energies—the creative expressive energies—of the U.S.A. are suppressed. The energies of a film are the energies of a land.

Grierson, it must be said to his credit, sought to re-vitalize

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the documentation with a structural intention. Yet he did not bring to his desire for intimacies the scrutiny—the *over-tonal interplay*—which such a re-vitalisation demands. Where are the people in his film? He is more engrossed with the *independent graces* of fish in the water—well-done details in themselves, but no part of the human process which the film was to be. The picture therefore is indeterminate: it is not the straight document such as *Business in Great Waters*, which satisfies its own demands; it is no re-vitalized revelation of human activity.

Nor does the film achieve the simplest of processes: that of accumulative muscular impact. It does not compel response to the fishers, to the sea. The filming of the nets as they are thrown overboard is good—catching them “on the go,” but this too remains an independent grace because it is not integrated in an ascending structure. This was a film intended to show labor. If Mr. Grierson thought to extend it to inferences beyond the facts of toil, to the total economy of exploitation, his attempts at inter-reference between sea and market, fisher and broker, were certainly too inadequate. The intention of labor is not fulfilled.

* * *

I dwell at length upon *Drifters* because of its meaning to America. I have long urged the film-makers to begin with the simple documentary. Instead of seizing a Paul Fejos and putting him on *Lonesome* or *Broadway*, such a young man should be presented with an exercise in documentation. The document is a basis, and the document transfigured is the ultimate work of art in the cinema.

The fishing-trade is of especial interest to me. I have

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planned a film of the fish docks, the "live car" bringing in the live fish from the ponds and streams of midwest and far-west U.S.A. I have followed the fish since swaddling days.

* * *

What do our enthusiastic young men do? H. W. has made a film called *A City Symphony*—an ambitious and reminiscent title. It is a montage-film—if montage means, as it does not, the pell-mell piling of fragments. Herman knew of the use of the negative as positive; so he loaded his film with that utility. Any device has its specific values. Haphazard and dense application of it is disastrous. H. W. should have asked; "What is the pattern and tonal value of this bit of negative in the order of my film?" He employs the negative in instances where its value is lost. For instance, when the locomotive comes in in negative it is nothing but a frozen block. If H. had intended a frozen locomotive, O.K., that would have been ingenuity, but he was after a mobile something—and this was not it. The entire film is unorganized, no pattern, rhythm, formal intention, is apprehended. And as for the photographic work: it is a beginner's. I think of the Lods-Kauffman film, *Aujourd'hui*; it sought parallels of movement, but destroyed the organization of the film by putting too much into it. Not knowing where to end the picture, they terminated it with an *Etc.* And that's how I feel about *A City Symphony*, it's all etcetera. First films like first poems should be writ and discarded: unless the light of inspiration is vivid in them. Paris has spoiled enough novices by professionalizing them. It is the prerogative of the swaddler to swaddle in this basin or that trundle. H. W. could first play in an "excentric" milieu making "stylized"

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films. Stylization here means lining one's face with smears and moving like a scarecrow: a mixture of Robert Florey and *Beggar on Horseback*. It is not what it should be: the intensification of a structure, the fantasy of the ordinary-into-the-extraordinary of the Japanese, Nielsen, Hessling, Krauss—the capture of the mean and the construction upon it. Not possessing a complete understanding of the choreographic nature of stylization, the “excentrics” (“excentric” is their spelling and the word itself exposes the spuriousness of the venture) did not take care that every detail should be “stylized.” A number of the persons of the drama were not altered a whit from their native pedestrian selves. The film has not been released. I present it as another instance of “love among the independents.”

H. A. POTAMKIN.

THE CINEMA AND THE CENSORS

In my two years' association with the little film-art theatres in America, I have had occasion to come in contact with various state departments of motion picture censorship, many, many times—due, perhaps, to the fact that these little film-art theatres made a speciality of showing imported films from France, Germany and Russia—where the temperament is

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somewhat different from that of America, and certain institutions, conventions, moral codes and established customs have been looked upon and have been treated in a manner well-calculated in intent and desired effect to upset the decorum of certain puritanical bureaucrats dedicated to the thankless and unholy task of keeping the sexual-stability and political affinities of the native bourgeoisie safe from the contamination of insidious "foreign propaganda."

From a careful resumé of eliminations ordered by them, I should say that they are concerned almost wholly with politics and sex, with the latter having a slight edge on the former as far as cuts have been made.

One thing which has impressed me more than even the gargantuan stupidity, infantilism and sheer philistinism of certain of their actions, is their religious and political intolerance! That it is inconsistent with free-speech, free-thought, religious freedom, etc.—all that which the Constitution of these United States is supposed to guarantee us, is no matter here. It does not exist. And being blind to the facts, resigning one's self to a martyred-complacency, can serve only to strengthen and render apparently "just" the illiterate regression of thought and action that constitutes any such censorship.

A few examples will be pertinent here. You say that we have religious freedom in America, and point to the Pilgrim Fathers coming here in search of it, and I tell you that the Pilgrim Fathers found Indians in America and it was not until "Americans" as such came into power that religious freedom was far from being realised here. A film, *The City Without Jews*, from the novel by Hugo Bettauer, dealing

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with the fantastic probability of what might happen to an anti-semitic metropolis, like Vienna, if the Jews were suddenly expelled from the town, was submitted to the N.Y. State Board of Censors. Bettauer, it must be remembered, was assassinated by a fanatical "Nordic" student for daring to think that a city would go to the dogs if the Jews were expelled. The film, in enlightened New York, was, at its first screening, rejected by the censors, and the matter had to be taken to the State Department of Education in Albany before it was finally allowed to be passed, but with so many eliminations of important titles (taken from Bettauer's book) that the whole thing was rendered quite innocuous.

Potemkin, that startling Russian film-document founded on an incident which occurred in the Black Sea in 1905, off the coast of Odessa, which dealt with such conditions as would have made any sailor who still had a spark of manhood left in him revolt, was banned by the Pennsylvania censors on the grounds "that it gave American sailors a blue-print as to how to conduct a mutiny."

Surely peace-loving, anti-militaristic, safe-for-Democracy America cannot be in sympathy with the erstwhile czarist régime before the debacle of the Romanoffs in 1917—yet, why was *Mother*, another Russian film, from a story by Gorki dealing with certain pogroms of 1905 which actually occurred, have been rejected completely? A young boy is arrested by the military police. His mother helps him to escape from prison. He is caught and shot. The mother hurls her maledictions at the institution which sanctioned the shooting of her only boy. What is "wrong" in that?

The Village of Sin, an exposition of the old and new orders

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in Russia as far as sex-bondage of women goes, one of the most moral and high-minded stories the screen has ever told—with all that was wicked and poisonous put to rout at the end and with a civilized kind of virtue triumphant, was banned by the Maryland State Board of Censors on the grounds that it dealt with incest (which it doesn't) and that this sort of goings-on was peculiar to Russia, and that it does not, as a general rule, exist here, and that it would disrupt the sacred institution of marriage in America. One has only to gain the confidence of a judge in any American criminal court to know whether or not such things do not, even as a general rule, exist here. The censors objected to a scene showing pitch on a door of two young people who had been living out of marriage. Yet such a scene was allowed to pass in Vilma Banky's *The Awakening*. They objected to a theme which bordered on incest—and passed *Stark Love* which reeks with it. Consistent? Don't make me laugh!

Hollywood films may be put on exhibitions of all sorts of sexual orgies—yet, here, one may not show a scene of a man kissing a woman on the neck, particularly if it is in a foreign movie. This state actually objected to a scene of a man and woman, seated on a couch, kissing. The film was *The Box of Pandora*, made in Germany. A young boy, with his head lying chastely in a woman's lap, was originally ordered out of this same film. And such frankly pornographic stuff as *The Cock-Eyed World*, the Joan Crawford films, and numerous others of their ilk, are passed without a qualm.

The entire last reel of *The Box of Pandora* was ordered out of this film. Those familiar with Wedekind's play will remember that it deals with Lulu, Wedekind's heroine, the

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final essence of the idea; woman, i.e., who has been abundantly charged with sex-consciousness. Insatiable impulses urge her life and challenge her fate. Man's power is eternally contributed to go with this driving impulse. Too soon, everybody is run over, hurled aside, exhausted. Sexuality alone remains—everything else seems lifeless, worthless—and the male succumbs, laughing, forgiving. . . . The last act finds Lulu, having drifted to the slums of London, soliciting in the sordid streets of Whitechapel. She meets a man, invites him to her room, not knowing that he is Jack-the-Ripper, the terror of the Whitechapel district. There is an incredibly lovely and wonderfully sensitive scene between Lulu and Jack-the-Ripper wherein the latter is shown in a human and sympathetic light as they muse over a sprig of holly and a single candle (it is Christmas Eve). Lulu draws Jack to her and the latter, accidentally catching sight of a knife on the table, is once more cruelly brought back to his peculiar pathological aberration and while embracing her with one hand, he thrusts the knife in her back with the other.

Of course this is "strong" stuff—it is also adult stuff. It does not glorify Lulu nor the sordid life she leads bringing destruction to everyone including herself. Wedekind for all his sensationalism was very much of a moralizer and *Pandora's Box*, *Earth-Spirit*, *Spring's Awakening*—all wind up with a high-minded moral at the end. However, the censors cannot see further than their blue-noses. To them things exist for their own sake. The end does not justify the means. They cannot see it—or they refuse, for some unknown reason, to see it. This entire sequence in *Pandora's Box* was rejected. It so happened that the German makers of this film, antici-

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pating trouble from the censors on this score, had provided the film with a second and "happy" ending showing Lulu following a Salvation Army band to a new and better life. This was the ending which was passed and shown in both New York and Maryland. I have the statement of a noted psychiatrist, Dr. Henry Stack Sullivan, of the Shephard Pratt Hospital in Maryland, that the film *Pandora's Box* (which I showed him before the censors cut it) was psychologically sound and one of the most powerful things he had ever seen.

The morning sun creeping through the latticed windows up the legs of a woman lying in bed asleep was ordered elimination from a film, *Three Loves*, which I presented in Baltimore. This was done on the grounds of immorality! John Gilbert may slobber all over Greta Garbo's mouth when kissing her, yet a harmless bit of showing a man chastely kissing a woman on the neck for a second or two, was considered immoral and ordered out of another film, *The Royal Scandal*—probably on the grounds that these foreign ways of kissing were entirely perverse! A sequence in a Ufa educational film dealing with the reproduction of some of the most minute forms of animal, plant and undersea life was ordered elimination by the New York Censors, also because these scenes were immoral and that the sex-act must not be shown under any circumstances even if it concerns fishes and amoebae because sex is associated with pleasure and they cannot conceive of the distinction between sex for pleasure and sex for procreation! And the censors are grown men and women, mind you, and profess to be well acquainted with "all the facts of life." It is in cases like these that they

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set themselves down as evil-minded, obscene inquisitors, so altogether low-minded that it staggers the imagination to encompass even a small portion of the idiocies perpetrated by them in whose name God and the intelligent man or woman only knows!

The censors should be made to explain why, for instance, so frankly a cheap sexy film like *Hell's Island* was passed in New York, or why that foul-smelling opus, *Unguarded Girls* was allowed to be shown in New York with ballyhooing more fit for a brothel than a movie theatre. Until such satisfaction is received I cannot see that there is any hope at all that the situation will be bettered.

There is the case of the British pacifist film, *High Treason* which deals with the outbreak of the next war and shows how that war is averted by the assassination of the President of Europe (the action is laid in 1940) by the president of a Peace League. It was passed intact in Maryland—yet barred in New York. All that the film said was that there must not be another war for it will be too terrible and will destroy the world. All differences must be settled by arbitration. There must be peace on earth, good-will among mankind. Surely these are Christ-like utterances. What are the censors afraid of? Or is it politics? Yet the sad case remains. Twelve years after the last carnage was ended and peace propaganda is still looked upon with disfavour. True, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Journey's End*, brave attempts in this direction, were passed. Then why discriminate? Why, indeed? That is the all-pervading question—why?

One can remain indifferent to stupidity only as long as it does not interfere with one's personal ideals and liberty.

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Censorship of this sort is a flagrant denial of such ideals and liberties. It is like prohibition. No one wants it—yet it is foisted on everybody.

One could go on forever enumerating myriads of examples of censorship actions. However, let it suffice here to sum it up in a few words. Upon throwing the statement at the censors once; "Doesn't such and such a thing actually exist in real life?" I was told that if they did, that was no reason why we must show such things. Evidently the truth hurts, and cuts deep at that. We must delude ourselves. This is the best of all possible worlds and everything is as it should be or it would have been ordained differently by the Creator.

We must say "No!" to life. We must be complacent and lethargic. We must not think for ourselves. We must submit to the thinking of others — assuming, of course, that "The others" *can* think at all. Even if they can't, it makes no difference.

Censorship would be amusing if it were not so painful. It is insanely inconsistent and altogether pathological in its motivations. I have spoken to physicians, noted "obscenity" lawyers and psychiatrists on this subject, and with them, every instance of sex censorship as applied in the cases I set before them, became a case for Freud or Kraft-Ebing.

How can the movies ever completely grow-up if there is a pre-censorship of what can and what cannot be filmed in Hollywood? And if the action of the censors here discourages the European producers from filming mature scenarios or sending them here (for fear that they will be banned and their influence lost).

HERMAN G. WEINBERG.

MOTION PICTURES IN THE CLASSROOM

The question whether the film could and should be used as an instrument of instruction, has often been raised. It is understood that where dynamic relations, motion, life, have to be shown and explained, the motion picture cannot be excelled nor replaced by any other visual aid. There are a number of schools where films are shown now and then, short documentary films, that happen to fit more or less into the programme of the class, but the film has not yet found its way into the classrooms as a regular aid and contribution to instruction. This is partly due to the immense costs which are involved in the production and showing of films, partly to a certain scepticism and conservative attitude of the teachers concerning the problem. Will the value of these contributions really surpass the difficulties and disadvantages of showing films? Will the pupils not be diverted from abstract thinking? Won't it take too much time? "Let us try!" said some American experts of teaching and in co-operation with the representatives of a big firm that produces film-material, they prepared an experiment on a large scale. The report of this investigation is assembled with great careful-

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ness in a very interesting volume, *Motion Pictures in the Classroom* (an experiment to measure the value of motion pictures as supplementary aids in regular classroom instruction) by *Ben D. Wood*, Columbia University and *Frank N. Freeman*, University of Chicago (published by the Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston).

The experiment was initiated by the Committee on Visual Instruction (appointed by the National Education Association) in co-operation with the Eastman Kodak Company. All the Film material and apparatus were contributed by the Eastman Kodak Company who also paid for the production of the films and other expenses. About 11,000 school-children and 200 teachers in twelve widely separated cities of the U.S.A. participated in the experiment during twelve weeks in the spring of 1928. The films used were made on standard narrow width—16 mm. safety stock, and projected on Kodascope Model A projectors.

It was the aim of the investigation "to learn what contributions twenty teaching films might make when used as a regular and integral part of classroom work." For this purpose twenty films were especially photographed after the scenarios planned by teachers who had great experience in their work. There was a set of ten films with geographical topics, another set dealing with topics of General science. Each film is divided into sections each forming a unit, which takes about fifteen minutes to be projected. There are very few subtitles used, but there is a special teachers' guide for every film, with a short description of the units and indications as to the direction in which the pupils' attention is to be drawn. The films were not to supplant words, nor to

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revolutionise the instruction, but to represent an addition to the usual means of instruction, a supplementary aid. They were not made in the manner of satisfying entertainment films, nor do they give an immediate answer to the questions they raise; their aim is to rouse interest, to provoke questions, and to stimulate the student to thinking and working on his experience. Among the topics of the general scientific films there is one on *Atmospheric Pressure*, another *Water Cycle*, *Planting and Care of Trees*, the geographical films deal with *Cotton Growing*, *Cattle*, *New England Fisheries—Cod*, etc.

Now the question was how to measure the effectiveness of these film-contributions. One must say that the leaders of the investigation treated this problem in the most careful, thorough, cautious and impartial way, handling a tremendous apparatus of statistics, tests, correlation-calculations, questionnaires, tables, lists, diagrams. You will find every detail, the minute prescriptions for the teachers and pupils, the descriptions of the topics and all the tests and figures in the excellent report by Ben D. Wood and Frank N. Freeman, mentioned above. We must limit ourselves to roughing out the essential proceedings of the experiment.

The pupils were divided into two groups, one of which was taught *with* the aid of the Eastman Films, the other group, fairly equal in number, age, sex, general ability, and school achievement, was taught *without* films, as a Control Group. About 7,500 pupils were in Geography classes, and 3,500 in General Science Classes. All the pupils were tested (1) in the beginning of the experiment, to compare the experimental and the control classes, (2) by another set of questions in the

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beginning and end of the experiment, to find out the relative gains, (3) at the end of the investigation for the comparison of the final achievement. These series of tests, called the "Comprehensive" tests, consisted in true-false statements, multiple-choice questions, and two-answer questions. There was another series of tests, "Topical Tests," more like an essay, in which the pupils had greater freedom to express themselves individually. Both series, which were planned and carried through independently from one another, gave the same result.

The result of the investigation was very much in favour for the instruction with the aid of films. For 61 per cent. of the pupils in Geography and 59 per cent. in General Science excelled the average of the Control Group. Also the great majority of the teachers in the Experimental classes kept a positive attitude toward teaching with motion pictures.

As to the quality of the achievements it was stated, that concrete knowledge was promoted more by the films than knowledge of abstract facts, or ability for generalisation.

This experiment is most important as the first great and official step in the movement of making the film a regular part of instruction. And it is to be hoped that it will increase and overcome all the difficulties of organisation—and not only in America.

TRUDE WEISS.

RE-READING OLD FRIENDS

Soon all films will be talkies. (At this point the old orchestra at the Avenue Pavilion would have emitted some cymbal crashes.)

The virtuous circle of the movies. *Soon all films will be talkies* would have been revolutionary in, say, Iris Barry's *Let's Go to the Pictures*. (Soon all talkies will be films.)

Now is a last chance to flick over pages of volumes which have influenced the past. For example, *The Art of the Moving Picture* by Vachel Lindsay. First published in 1915; reprinted in revised form in 1922. Obscure Griffith productions discussed, accentuating, maybe, the acuteness of vision which glimpsed the elasticity of bronze sculpture in the cowboy on horseback.

Dandy to talk about sculpture-in-motion: the power of many scenes depending on the fact that if the film is stopped suddenly one can find a monumental quality in the grouping. "The eye makes its journey, not from space to space, or fabric to fabric, but first of all from mass to mass." (Critics still serve this up as fresh.) Dandy to talk about painting-in-motion: there are effects of light irradiant from some sparkling head dress, patterns of space relating to definite

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conventional triangular compositions in dress and figure, tones and shades adjusted in space, time units of smoke and tossing sails which can be orchestrated into silent symphonies of different speeds.

In 1915 Mr. Lindsay wrote.

“ The music of silent motion is the most abstract of moving picture attributes and will probably remain the least comprehended.” And the obsession that actors are hieroglyphics, dolls, that actors are a personal application of their background. Fairy tale architecture may amount to an incantation, but in ordinary drama the student will be sceptical about the enormous importance that V.L. gives to his non-human textures, spaces and lines.

(What a *shime* he did not know the words “ motographic ” and “ imagegraph.”)

The Mind and the Film by Gerard Fort Buckle ; the nearest thing in English to French film criticism. Not mimical. Justifications for the fade, the dissolve, the iris, tinting, moving cameras, colour and stereoscopic photography.

The fade—says Mr. Buckle, “ shaping his work to the needs of a psychological treatise ”—is equivalent to the closing of a human eye ; from this the importance of a rapid as opposed to a slow fade-out. The human eye, closed suddenly, imprints the last object noted on the mind ; in other words there is a loss of the power to control thought movement. It is a serious thing if, through injudicious use of the fade, the producer kills the thought movement completely. By reducing the thought movement to a minimum flow a subject can be diverted into the subconscious mind, leaving the conscious mind ready for a new problem.

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The dissolve is considered as "suspended action," a psychological device for heavy scenes . . . Voilà! A heroine returns from a fateful walk with her lover. She has to face her brother's eyes. By a series of dissolves the director attempts to avoid breaking the dramatic tension. "For a moment life seems to have stopped; and this, following on top of a scene of life and action, previously flashed off, left the human brain in startling reality—what a combination of the uses of the dissolve and flash!"

Lighting Mr. Buckle rightly regards as a most important aid to the mind. In great moments of emotion we are no longer aware of time and place and lighting can be used to lift a character right out of the set. Emotions are thus made of paramount importance. Correct treatment of lighting can only be obtained by considering the whole picture; for a person's life is made up of light and shade. Why overlight a corner of a person's life when that corner happens to be in shade? Not all scenes should be drably lit, or all sets flooded with light. Correct lighting moulds the picture.

Angles should be changed when the viewer has been sufficiently stimulated for the brain to concentrate and cause the eye to accommodate; when the subonscious focus (at infinity) changes to the conscious focus. At the same time, the author does admit that the superimposition of angle shots does produce the illusion of perspective.

A lot of it is so true that it might be pilfered for a new article. Indeed, haven't I just done something like that?

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

BLOCKHEADS

Some of the "wizards" of Wardour Street are so astute that they are losing a first class opportunity of adding to their ill-gotten gains at the expense of the cinema-going public—in the Provinces at least.

There used to be a very popular song some years ago which asked a rather inane question—"Where do flies go in the winter-time?" I am seriously thinking of writing another which, since it asks a very sensible question, ought to be an even greater "hit." Its title will be "Where do good films go in the summer-time?"

I know many Provincial cinema-goers—I cannot speak of London in this respect—who are very anxious to hear the answer to that question. I know it, but I am afraid it will not help them to find the good films, simply because these are hidden in the vaults of Wardour Street awaiting the time of the year when all the flies so mysteriously disappear.

As a provincial critic I make it my business to see as many films as possible. On an average I go to the cinema four times a week, not including trade shows. During the last few months, however, I have not been once a week, and at one period at least a fortnight passed without my seeing a single film.

Every week I recommend to my readers certain films

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among the coming attractions for the district, as being distinctly above the average and well worth the expenditure of their hard earned shillings. Lately I have been at my wits' end which films to mention. On ninety-five per cent. of the films shown in the district where I live, I would not have spent one of my own shillings or one and sixes, let alone have been rash enough to advise others to spend their's.

The blunt truth of the matter is that the Provinces are not getting a square deal from the big-wigs of Wardour Street. They seem to be under the impression that simply because occasionally we have a warm day during this wretched summer of ours, nobody wants to go to the cinema. As for those who are mad enough to do so, well, they can take pot luck and, what does Wardour Street care if nine times out of ten those people are thoroughly annoyed that they have wasted time and money?

Frankly, it is not good enough. Provincial audiences have as much—and more—right to be considered, as London audiences. If it was only in London that people went to see films the cinema industry would speedily "feel the draught." It is the provincial cinema-goer who foots the greater part of the bill and he has a right to a say in what the tune shall be, otherwise he will be perfectly justified in refusing to pay.

The cinema world is not exactly notorious for an inferiority complex, but in this case it seems definitely to be afraid. We hear complaints about bad business during the summer months. "People don't want to go into cinemas when it is fine and warm. They want to be out in the country, playing cricket or tennis, or to be on the river." That is their line of argument.

CLOSE UP

Well, what else can they expect? There is no inducement to go to the cinema. There is not one film in twenty released during the summer that is worth seeing.

I thought it was a truism of the business world that when trade is bad business men should make special efforts to improve it. Does the cinema? Of course, it doesn't. It simply says "Well, we can't help it. We'll just have to wait until winter and then people will have to come to see our films whether they want to or not."

It is unfortunate that these "business" blockheads come by their money so easily. If only people showed a little more independence and retorted "If you won't send us good films in the summer we won't come and see your good films in the winter" there would be a speedy change of front.

It is not playing the game and I am amazed that an industry which is noted for its enterprise—not to say cheek—in trying to obtain publicity, should accept so calmly and indifferently the competition of open air pursuits, without lifting a hand or raising a voice in retaliation. They have succumbed without a shadow of a fight.

What is to be done about it? Nothing I suppose, like all the proposed reforms in the cinema world, such as the censorship. Films have secured such a hold in the favour of the public that they cannot keep away. They go week in and week out no matter what the films shown—like a flock of sheep and with only a little more intelligence.

Let the mighty men of Wardour Street, however, beware that some day they do not cast aside that clothing and reveal themselves as wolves.

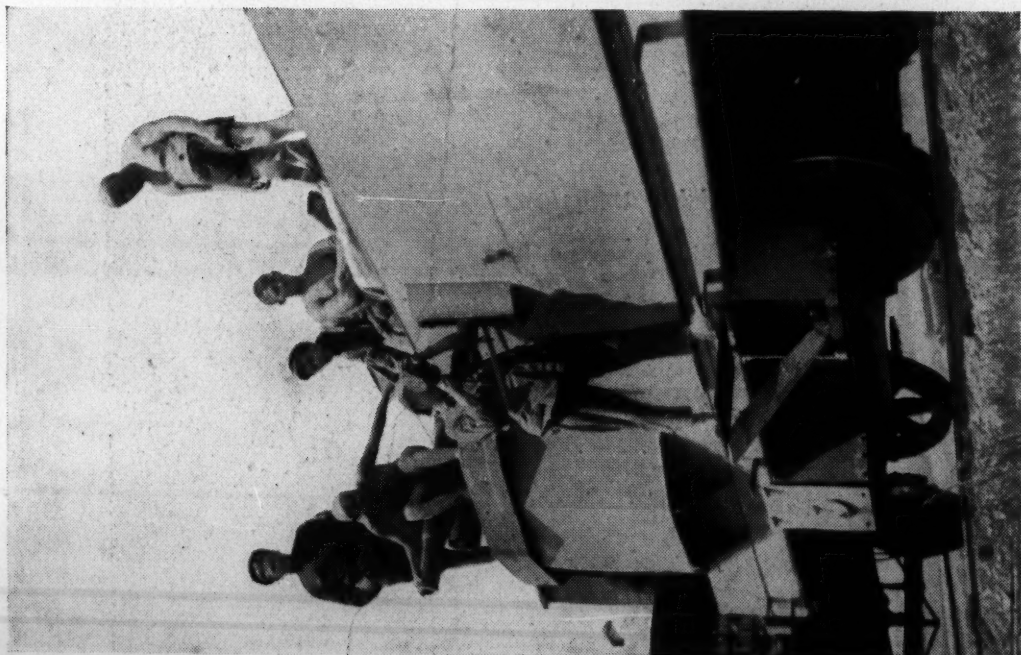
LESLIE B. DUCKWORTH.

CONRAD VEIDT

Conrad Veidt . . . *Nju, The Student of Prague, Caligari, Waxworks* . . . he did those so well, and now they are dead, now we have passed beyond them, one expected to find Conrad Veidt standing for something that was dead. But he does not stand for it at all. He is very much alive. I saw him at Elstree, working on the German version of Dupont's *Cape Forlorn*, with Fay Compton hovering typistically about. When you meet Veidt, you do not meet the nervous piano player of *The Hands of Orlac*, you look in vain for the famous bulging vein in the forehead, for you talk to someone exceedingly genial, someone who seems far too well, someone who surprises you by being tall and broad. And the screen Veidt seems a kind of a caricature. This is his third talkie. The first was *The Land Without Woman*. The second *The Last Company*. In the English version of this latter, his voice is doubled by an English actor, who went specially over to Berlin, and after Veidt had "silently," in what he called "his bad English," spoken the English words, the Englishman recorded them in synchronisation. It was successful, but Veidt is not anxious to repeat it. It is too difficult, after he has got the feeling of a part, for someone else to try and get that feeling into someone else's voice.



From Pudovkin's film, *Life is Good*. On right, Chistiakoff, who played the part of the father in *Mother*.



A Production still from *Life is Good*. The cameraman for Pudovkin's unfinished film is Kabalov. Assistant : Strunnikov. Scenarist : Rzhesheshevsky.



Life is Good. Leading role : Marie.



Life is Good. Pudovkin at work with his operator, Kabalov.
Photo by Strunnikov.



Discussing a shot for *Life is Good.* Pudovkin in contemplation.
Photo by Strunnikov.



From *Chez les Mangeurs d Hommes (Among Cannibals)*, a film by Lugeon, and Antoine.





From *The Beauty Prize*, the French talkie with Louise Brooks, the scenario of which was written by René Clair.





From *Borderline*, a Pool Film by K. Macpherson, featuring Paul Robeson.



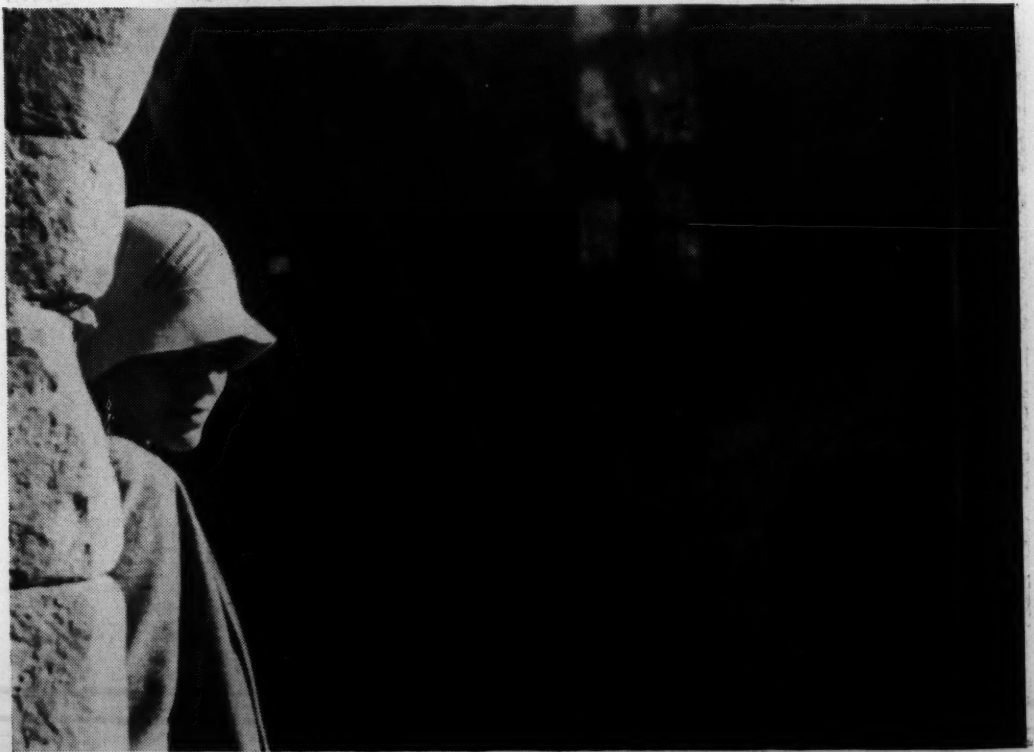


From *Borderline*.





Borderline, a Pool Film featuring Paul Robeson. Below, Eslanda Robeson, who plays opposite her husband.



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And he is not anxious to go on repeating. Of *Caligari* he said "Yes, when we had made that, the producers, those who had put up the money, saw it; they looked at Wiene, and at me, they looked at all of us and they said we were mad. And the film was a terrific success. But one cannot repeat that, one cannot do that again." He said the same about talkies; you cannot get over the trouble of having your language spoken by people with a foreign accent by such happy chance as gave Garbo *Anna Christie* and Jannings *The Blue Angel*. That does once, but you cannot go on doing that. He himself is resigned to becoming a national talkie actor, after years of international fame. And he does not mind. "There never was a silent cinema," he said "you never got scenarios written ("shaped" as C.A.L. would say) for miming only, you never got actors who had a really silent technique; they talked, they spoke, and you did not hear them, that was all. Chaplin was only an exception. So of course I like talkies, they have given us what we had not and were trying to make up for." He added, though, that talkies themselves do not know what they should be any more than the silent cinema did. "The accent in talking pictures must be on the "picture," and listen . . . the photography must be plastic, because the voice is plastic, you see; it is rounded; hard photography will not do."

"It is wonderful," said a man at B.I.P. "how these Germans work things out," as if it were something quite outside what they need do. Herr Veidt gives you the idea of knowing what he is doing, and of going straight ahead. "I believe in everything," he said when I told him of television. "So many things have happened these last few twenty years,

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I say "Yes" when you tell me of anything to-morrow." So he hasn't stopped. He isn't still walking sadistically along crooked roofs in black tights. He believes in what is being done, in television, in flying—though he hates it—in night life. His geniality and his enthusiasm, together with his unexpected robustness, make him seem young and eager. He is amused, and he knows where he is "because you never know." He liked Hollywood. "It had sun all day, I had a nice house and a swimming pool, there were flowers, and one thought it was paradise. One talked of oil and cars and pictures. But after a little one said "Well, I would like to talk of something else now," and one could not." But "studios are studios everywhere, there is no difference, and the best studio is the one that gives you most money, that is all." He confessed that though he likes talkies, film acting is harder than the stage, which he still carries on. On the stage, you can work out your part, get the feeling and carry it to the peak. But beginning again and again in a film, you have to start again and again with the feeling; the strain is greater. Nevertheless, after finishing in *Cape Forlorn* on a Friday, he begins in Berlin a talkie under Kurt Bernhardt the next Monday, so he seems able to withstand the strain. I should add that Herr Veidt injects his conversation with "Sures" and "O.K.'s" which I have not attempted to reproduce. "You see, I do not speak English, only the language I picked up in Hollywood."

ROBERT HERRING.

CLOSE UP

DOVJENKO ON THE SOUND FILM

(In an interview with R. Bond.)

The cinematographic art has accomplished the first chapter of its history as the art of the silent cinema and it enters now on the second phase of its development which is marked by the introduction of the element of sound.

The technical improvements which have evolved in the course of this year and the enormous sums that have been spent on it have completely changed the physiognomy of the screen. They have made it more expressive and more impressive. No doubt in three or four more years the screen to which we have been accustomed will no longer be able to give place to all the cinematographic requirements. It is possible that this development will destroy the screen and that the screen will give way to a screenless cinema in which the spectator will be in a position to receive the film as if he had been placed in the centre of the cinematographic action. In this direction there are boundless prospects for the cinema, especially if we take into consideration the new technique of television, which allows the reproduction of every film in every place.

However, today the talking films still present a large

number of deficiencies and one of the most important and most menacing for the growth of true cinematographic culture is the language—the spoken word.

Trying to solve the problems of reproduction of the spoken word in the cinema along the line of least resistance, the film directors have filled the films with dialogue, making thus out of the sound film talking films rivaling the worst specimens of bad theatre. As a result the film became undynamic and slow and at the same time the predomination of the word in the sound film has brought to it a new element of nationalism. It is destroying the cinematography of small countries and it is complicating the production of films by creating the necessity to have several variations of each film for each separate country. At the same time all the sounds of nature which are not less rich and not less expressive than the human voice are still left outside the screen.

The Soviet cinema entered the production of sound films after America and Western Europe. We have not yet sufficient apparatus for shooting sound films, neither have we enough sound screens. The reason for this is that our resources are taken up with the more pressing needs of our construction. Another reason is that the organisation of our cinema has as its centres not so much the big cities as the whole country with its outlying districts so that the reconstruction of all the screens in the Soviet Union must take some more years of work. However, we are now conducting an investigation into the possibilities of the sound film and of experiments with it. In a short time, probably, the Soviet sound films will make their appearance on the European film

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market and will be able to show a new departure in the application of sound.

At the present time we are working on the production of a film that could be understood by everybody, regardless of the differences of language. We have to find the right place of the word in the sound film and the part which it has to play in it, also as far as the quantity of the spoken element is concerned. The human word must be brought to perfection, but silence also must be used in the film, and the word and the music should not be used for the sake of the music, or for the sake of giving to the actor an opportunity of producing a song.

The doors must be wide open to the screen for the sounds of the world and the most important is to find the right principles for the combination of the visible montage with the audible montage. The first necessity is to come to the clear understanding of what the sound film is. The sound is a reality, but in the sound cinema it cannot be simply reproduced. It must be created anew.

(Mr. Dovjenko has been visiting London and studying the talkie situation here. His latest production, *Earth* will be presented in London shortly.—R.B.)

SOUS LES TOITS DE PARIS!

Un titre délicieux pour un film qui ne l'est pas moins ! René Clair affirme d'œuvre en œuvre un talent toujours plus assoupli, une manière d'expression qui, dans la recherche des signes visuels, la mise en valeur délicate du détail, marque une manifeste progression. *Le Chapeau de Paille D'Italie* pouvait s'entendre reprocher son inspiration théâtrale, quand bien même, de toute évidence, l'espace y regagnait ses droits. Une telle réserve ne peut être formulée à l'égard de la récente réussite de Clair : c'est cinéma, indubitablement, et de plus, cinéma intégral 1930, c'est à dire, images, rythme et sons.

Nous n'avons pas si souvent que cela l'occasion de prôner les talkies, en général, et les parlants français, en particulier. Nous ne laisserons pas échapper celle qui nous est offerte aujourd'hui.

Si nous examinons tout d'abord la matière du récit cinématographique, également imaginé par René Clair, nous ne pouvons nous défendre d'un sentiment très naturel de jouissance intellectuelle, car il y a là, comme dans *Les Heures de Cavalcanti*, auxquelles un exquis *Rien Que* s'ajoutait, une observation prodigieusement éveillée des mille et une manifestations de la rue, dont seule l'imagination du poète sait extraire,

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malgré la lassitude de l'uniformité, l'âme collective ou individuelle. Cela commence, pour le spectateur, exactement comme une banale distraction offerte au passant désœuvré . . . un groupe de badauds fait le cercle autour d'un chanteur des rues . . . répète avec lui le refrain, sans beaucoup d'entrain, parce que cela change tout de même un peu du potage journalier. Une fille se joint nonchalamment aux curieux . . . un lascar refait en douce les sacs à main . . . où donc est l'appareil de prise de vues? partout et nulle part, il ne tient pas en place et tandis que se répètent les interminables couplets de *Sous Les Toits de Paris*, nous jetons un coup d'œil amusé dans les logis diversément habités d'un immeuble. Nonchalance des démarches, joie passive inscrite sur les physionomies . . . et les minutes s'écoulent, ainsi, la pellicule ne mesure pas son métrage . . . Sans en avoir autrement le pressentiment, nous avons fait ainsi connaissance avec un peu tout le monde et, ce qui est mieux, deviné, grâce aux concises indications psychologiques, " ce qui cuit dans la marmite " de chacun. Nous nous en tiendrons au chanteur des rues (Préjean) à la fille (Pola Illery) au copain (Greville) et au marlou (Modot); mais, visiblement, nous n'eussions pas dédaigné de suivre tel ou tel type auxiliaire, dont, au reste, l'on ne perd que par intermittence, le contact. Et entre les personnages précités s'établit un commerce très spectaculaire et des échanges d'amitié, de désir, de courage, de peur, ou simplement d'ennui, dont la vie journalière est tissée. Alors quoi, un film réaliste, tout simplement? Mais oui, un film réaliste, qui, au surplus, fait apparaître l'artifice d'innombrables réalismes cinégraphiques. L'essentiel, n'est-il pas vrai, c'est que le chanteur des rues, le marlou, le co-

pain et la fille, soient ni plus ni moins qu'eux-mêmes et ne visent qu'à exprimer leur rôle avec un naturel abandon. Tous les acteurs, sans exception, n'y ont pas manqué.

Reste la forme sous laquelle l'image est rendue, pour ainsi dire, à la réalité, c'est à dire conçue en son exécution de telle sorte qu'elle n'éveille aucune sensation d'apprêt. Il y faut une certaine adresse, à ce jeu qui ne consiste, somme toute, qu'à créer sans laisser percer la volonté même de créer, à montrer sans ostentation ce que l'on entend tout de même imposer à l'attention du spectateur. Et René Clair excelle, plus qu'aucun autre à "indiquer," avec la forme, le mouvement, en eux-mêmes déjà visuellement attrayants, l'intention latente, l'énergie passive mais en éveil, l'idée, pour tout dire, qui habite passagèrement les personnages.

Il y a, de plus, dans sa manière de traiter l'accompagnement sonore, une certaine pondération déjà, qui ne s'observe pas si communément. Et bien que le chant forme la base constante d'expression sonore, il s'en faut de beaucoup que sa répétition suscite la monotonie, car les nuances, ici, entretiennent la variété.

FREDDY CHEVALLEY.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

PERSONAL VIEWPOINT.

We are sent to school as children ; is that why education is confused with childishness ?

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At the Exhibition of Mechanical Aids to Learning, the talking shorts we happened to hear made us realise that education beyond the child stage is, in England, forbidden to us : it is called propaganda and banned !

Then, those interested in visual education are obviously supposed to be above the attractions of showmanship. We climbed many stairs to see a special daylight screen. The manufacturers, also, had taken the trouble to carry the screens up all those stairs. Yet, they demonstrated with dirty lantern slides. And nobody could be troubled to select slides (even if soiled) of reasonable intelligence.

There were more encouraging moments. Western Electric gave us a strip of sound film (good publicity matter); Visual Information Service introduced us to a Unit Portable Lantern with slides (costing a penny each) which are mounted in a strip and which can be made up, from the lecturer's own material, for a charge of three pence per picture; and television was represented.

But mechanical education is such a vital subject. To put it tactfully, all six hundred had blundered.

O. B.

FLIP THE FROG.

Because *Flip the Frog*, the new series by UB. Iwerks, is being presented by a new renting house we would like to be able to say, " More from one of the creators of *Mickey Mouse* and honkey dory, boys."

The truth is, though, that these cartoonists have one

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special idea in their nuts and they can't forget. After a morning of cartoons a critic begins to pray that he may never again have to see an exactly synchronised picture. They should have made one series, on the synchronised principle, and then gone on to something else.

Of course, after moonlight and honeysuckle, they are a rest; but the cartoonists can't serve it up hot on a plate *ad infinitum*. O. B.

DESLAW'S LATEST.

Eugene Deslaw, creator of *The March of the Machines*, *La Nuit Electrique* and *Montparnasse*, has just completed a study upon the gradual mechanisation of mankind, the title of which will most probably be *Humain Mecanique*.

Almost entirely laying aside the double exposures and trick-photography to be found in much of his other work, Deslaw demonstrates with a frank simplicity though with a sometimes cruel humour that Man is tending to become entirely mechanised.

By a cunning *mélange* of almost human objects with almost mechanical human beings, one is hypnotised and impressed by Deslaw's theory that "human must go."

Humain Mecanique will very shortly be presented in Paris and, it is hoped, also in London, after which Eugene Deslaw will complete *Negative*, an interesting essay on the curious effects obtainable by the projection of negative film. Not the first time that negative has been directly projected, but the first complete film told entirely in terms of negative.

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"Black light can exist" proves Deslaw, and the negative sequences such as the black sun between white trees or startling negative reflections upon water testify that such an essay neither lacks beauty nor yet need lack originality.

C. E. S.

EDUCATIVE EXHIBITION.

Guided by the announcement in September *Close Up* we visited the Exhibition of Mechanical Aids to Learning, which the British Institute of Adult Education arranged in London.

On seeing such a varied array of apparatus (the greater part being of British manufacture) all ideal for educational purposes, one wonders all the more *why* so little use has been made of such apparatus in English schools and colleges.

R.C.A. Photophone demonstrated a portable sound-film projector enabling film *and* lecture to be carried from house to house! Messrs. Kodak gave a programme of 16mm. educational films: their explanatory film on Relativity is so cleverly contrived that one leaves with the feeling of having mastered all Einstein's theories. There is perhaps the danger of "a little knowledge. . ."

There were signs of the growing popularity of Epidiascopes, which project opaque objects in their natural colours. An English firm exhibited Filmslides, which are still pictures on standard non-inflammable cine-film and which afford the most economical and convenient method of illustrating group talks and general class-work. (Vide programme.) Mr. Ritchie Lennie of Glasgow demonstrated his highly ingenious though somewhat cumbersome "Anti-dark" (Daylight)

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Screen and Tunnel, which enables inflammable film to be safely and clearly projected in broad daylight.

Also Television—and in wonder we watched and heard an image and a voice being transmitted from Long Acre to Houghton Street.

Amongst the numerous lectures and demonstrations given during the course of the exhibition were programmes of Educational talking-films arranged by the W.E. and the R.C.A. Companies, also a Demonstration Class conducted by Mr. Ronald Gow, who is to-day quite celebrated for the films he has made with the collaboration of the pupils at Altrincham County School.

Praise to the Adult Educationalists.

CHARLES E. STENHOUSE.

EXHIBITION.

Recently, the Camera Club held an exhibition of stills by an amateur cinematographer. Some of the contributors to the London Salon of Photography might have learnt at least one thing from this exhibition — that, if nothing better can be thought of, a single source of light often is a simple salvation. Such a picture as Italo Bertoglio's *The Song of the Geese* has a certain vitality from one way lighting (shadows of china birds spread on white paper).

This is the 21st birthday of the London Salon. Maurice Beck exhibits greased nudes; Cecil Beaton gets mussed up with multiple exposures of Mrs. Gladys Calthrop; the discussed P. Dubreuil shows flat enlargements of scenes dominated by a foreground object; A. Bologna presents two un-

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cooked eggs swimming in a plate or six ping pong balls on twisted paper; F. Drtikol has some pretty poses with silhouettes; Dorothy Fuller has such a coy male nude; and all the others have misty landscapes, character old men, oily landscapes, pool reflections.

THIS IS THE 21st BIRTHDAY OF THE LONDON SALON!

BOOK REVIEWS.

A Voyage to Purilia, by Elmer Rice. (Victor Gollancz. 7s. 6d.)

Elmer Rice is no cocoa novelist!

His book is about a trip to film land, Purilia, wrapped in rose mist and lapped in perpetual cadences of saccharine harmony.

It is a period novel, guying the silent film. An unseen Presence introduces, in a loud voice, characters and places to the explorers. ("Here Dame Fortune and the Demon Rum take their heavy toll and sin rears its ugly head.") And a great deal of Griffith-aged fun is made of the close up. ("Pansy stopped, her hand upon the latch, and turned towards us. Her face distended until it blotted out the cottage itself." "It's the most beautiful house in the world," she said, with simple feeling. "It's home.'")

But so much is beautifully apposite. The way the deer, cows, sheep always manage to make their way, slowly in single file, along the very ridges of the hills so that their bodies are sharply silhouetted against the sky. The way the Purilians are thrown into confusion by a knock on the

door, yet remain unmoved by a tornadoesque descent, in a parachute, of a long lost brother into the back garden. The way that maternity and virginity are almost equally exalted. The way all love is *spiritual*, marriage meaning nothing more than an oblivion fade-out.

It says a lot for the early films that the reader is carried along by Mr. Rice's yarn, amalgam of all early films. Granted that Mr. Rice is burlesquing, but what better burlesque of a film than a film?

One feels certain that Mr. Rice would admit that the talkies have reached the sophistication of the stage. Not that that is saying much, but it is saying something to the author.

Meanwhile, the titillating *A Voyage to Purilia* is on no account to be missed.

A Book of Make-up, by Eric Ward. (Samuel French, Ltd. 3s. 6d.)

Zenith!

A make-up book with colour illustrations, every colour in the charts being make-up. This is tantamount to genius!

In all the illustrations the same classical head has been used and is shown by dotted lines.

Then, there is an index. (Bibulous Characters. Corn-flour for Hair. Etc.)

The text is arranged so that the book can be propped open on the make-up table: there is no turning of pages for in-assimilable details.

A cannonade of reasons why the book should be bought.

CLOSE UP

The same laws of light and shade apply to both film and stage make-up, but the chapters of filmic grease paint are thorough.

Sagely the student is warned to obtain the advice of the cameraman. He is told that hard lines are out of the question; that high lights are produced by shading below the required spot; that "beading" of the eye lashes is taboo; that white body make-up should be tinted; that the sheen, produced by the use of spirit gum, must be carefully powdered. It is pointed out that nature and make-up should co-operate when the face is in animation.

There are full lists of the Max Factor numbers for panchromatic stock.

In stage make-up the author begins by stating that practically all shadows are eliminated. He looks on the face, therefore, as a blank sheet of paper.

Hints that the face, not the mirror, should be illuminated in making-up; that the function of powder is to fix pigment on the skin; that bole armenia, dusted on the hair, gives a splendid ginger effect; that a graphite pencil (BBB) is excellent for sketching in wrinkles; and so on.

There is a chapter on "confidential" make-up for the street. (Cochineal is recommended instead of dry rouge.)

There are exhaustive chapters on racial types, written with a full knowledge of the present day. For example, while the author notes that Bedouin women tatoo stars on their cheeks, he does not think the modern Frenchman is refulgent with "imperial" and "fish-tail."

On page 77 he gives the true secret of Mongolian eyes.

CLOSE UP

"The public have been educated up to expect the standard of illumination associated with the opaque or silver screen so generally used in silent work."

High Intensity, a booklet issued by Chas. H. Champion, shows how the new High Intensity Lamp can give more light on the screens devised to allow sound waves to pass through them.

There are, it appears, three types of H.I. Lamp.

1. H.I. Lamp with rotating positive carbon arranged with the crater facing the condensers and in co-axial alignment with the optical axis.

2. H.I. Lamp with rotating positive carbon and mirror reflector.

3. H.I. Mirror Reflector with stationary positive carbon.

The book is illustrated with good photographs.

One diagram is of three carbons after burning half-an-hour in a rotating H.I. Lamp at 130 amperes. 59 arc volts.

The consumption registered in inches per hour was :—

1. British Ship Carbon : 10.

2. Continental : 13.

3. American : 15.

Another pat on the back for England.

O. B.

AN HOUR WITH THE MOVIES AND THE TALKIES.

By Gilbert Seldes. Published by J. B. Lippincott, Company, London.

This book which summarises important landmarks in the growth of the Cinema during the last decade makes interesting reading but covers little fresh ground. The author

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rapidly surveys the early developments and arrives at the conclusion that "at the age of 25 the American movie had the mentality of a child of six." The reason is attributed largely to the dependence of the film on the stage. Adolf Zukor and his "Famous Players," the passion for stage players and stage plays stifled the independent development of the movie as an art form. "Like a child brought up in a dark room, it shrank from the light, like a cripple it preferred not to move. And light and movement are its life."

The Keystone Comedies, says Mr. Seldes, were an accomplishment, and we agree. They represented in terms of psychology an escape from reality. However crudely, the Keystones had within them the source of cinema, the unreal, the fantastic. Would it be wrong to say that Mickey Mouse is the direct successor of those early slapsticks which did so much to cure the cripple?

Mr. Seldes makes an interesting comment on the Keystones. "The population of the Keystone world consists of scamps, scoundrels, shysters, fakers—outcasts of our social order—with policemen and pretty girls as foils to their activity; a little later the poor and oppressed; waiters and barbers and shopgirls; but the successful, well-groomed, alert and smart American never enters."

And after the Keystones—Charlie Chaplin.

A section on the rise of movie criticism. The attitude of contempt for the Cinema and all its work; the condemnation of all American films and the worship of the European; a defence of the theorists. "In almost all practical matters the theorist has been right about the movies, and the practical men, with a few exceptions have been constantly wrong."

CLOSE UP

Several pages, intelligent pages, on the Soviet Cinema. "The propaganda (in the Russian film) does not spoil the picture because it is inherent in the picture."

Mr. Seldes, we think, involves himself in a contradiction in discussing Russian montage. On the one hand he expresses great admiration for the methods of the Russians, for the manner in which they organise their material to achieve visual impacts on the audience; on the other hand he classifies as a mistake the consideration of the single picture, or a few feet of pictures as the building unit. But if this conception leads to the construction of the films which Mr. Seldes so frankly admires, wherein lies the mistake?

On the "talkies," in a rather inadequate section, Mr. Seldes asks if the movie has come to its natural end with the talking picture and answers that the talkies will be their end, in the sense of goal, if their makers have the intelligence to recognise the instruments, capacities and limitations of the new medium.

A useful addition for the film library.

R. BOND.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES.

Ever and anon some prophet of evil arises to assure a careless public that Hollywood's foreign market is threatened with extinction. Film import duties, quota laws, ruinous censorship, scorn of American speech and manners, habitual critical dispraise of Hollywood, competitive European production—in short, every sign points to the approaching doom of American films abroad. On the other hand, however, are

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the dispassionate figures of commerce. According to these, the export of American films continues steadily to increase. Despite the general business depression of the current year, an official report of the United States Department of Commerce recently made public discloses that twenty per cent. more film was exported during the first six months of 1930 than during the corresponding period of 1929. The actual total, breaking all records, amounted in round numbers to one hundred and forty-five million linear feet—or, to express it more dramatically, 27,462 miles. A choice of conclusions, therefore, regarding Hollywood's fate must rest either upon an acceptance of figures or a belief in signs.

* * *

One of the most serious of the many objections first offered against the talking film has now been successfully met. This particular objection was based on the complaint of the hard of hearing that they were deprived of their former enjoyment of motion pictures. Now, however, the cinemas are installing individual adjustable ear-phones for the use of deaf patrons, by means of which every sound from the screen is sufficiently amplified to enable such patrons to hear it distinctly. Already a score or more of the leading picture theatres of Los Angeles have been thus equipped, and within the next few months their example will have been followed everywhere throughout the United States. Once again, therefore, Hollywood must be thanked for that ever-active and dauntless spirit of commercialism which has inspired every development of the American cinema.

* * *

The Big Trail, Fox's historical picture of Western pioneer

CLOSE UP

days, directed by Raoul Walsh, appears destined to take first rank among the major productions released this fall. Upwards of ten thousand persons, including hundreds of American Indians, were employed in the making of the film. For the purpose of securing authentic backgrounds, the company during its four months on location travelled through sixteen Western states and covered a distance of some twelve thousand miles. The entire picture was recorded on both Grandeur and standard-size film, and its total cost approximated two million dollars.

* * *

Evidently convinced of the popular welcome that will be accorded the Fox picture, RKO are preparing to film one of like character and at the same time to overtop it in bigness and expense. This will depict the settling of Oklahoma, as told in Edna Ferber's latest novel, *Cimarron*. Its chief spectacular feature will be the historic "land rush" which marked the throwing open by the United States Government of the Territory of Oklahoma to American homesteaders, and in which tens of thousands of prospective settlers, at a given signal, simultaneously rushed across the borders on foot, on horseback, in wagons and on bicycles, to stake their claims to homesites. Forty-two thousand men, women and children, to say nothing of thousands of dogs, horses and cattle, will be used in the making of the picture, according to a studio announcement.

* * *

The New Moon, a popular stage play, has been filmed by M-G-M, with Lawrence Tibbett and Grace Moore in the stellar rôles. The story has a Russian military setting, and

CLOSE UP

as an aid to its realism the soldiers employed in the picture were recruited from Russian ex-service men and drilled under the command of General Theodore Lodi, a former officer of the Czar's Imperial Guard. The sincerity of the film is further assured by reason of General Lodi's personal supervision of the various characteristic details of the drama's mise en scène.

* * *

Carl Laemmle, in a recent radio talk, confided to his hearers that upon the announcement of Universal's intention to film *All Quiet on the Western Front*, many critics and self-elected cinema authorities urged him against it, on the ground that the contemplated picture lacked the essential elements of popularity and was accordingly foredoomed to failure. On the contrary, some ten thousand of the common people, from all parts of the country, voluntarily wrote to him approving of his intention. And it was this approval, as representative of public opinion, that determined the making of the film. It has long been Laemmle's policy to invite the confidence of picture fans and to be governed by the suggestions that come to him directly from this source in the form of personal letters. His studio mail contains at least five thousand of these letters every week. Primarily his business is to serve Main Street; and it is Main Street's opinions that he shrewdly accepts as a guide, rather than those of the metropolitan critics. Perhaps this may account for the fact that he is only one of the pioneer producers who is still independently in business.

C. H.

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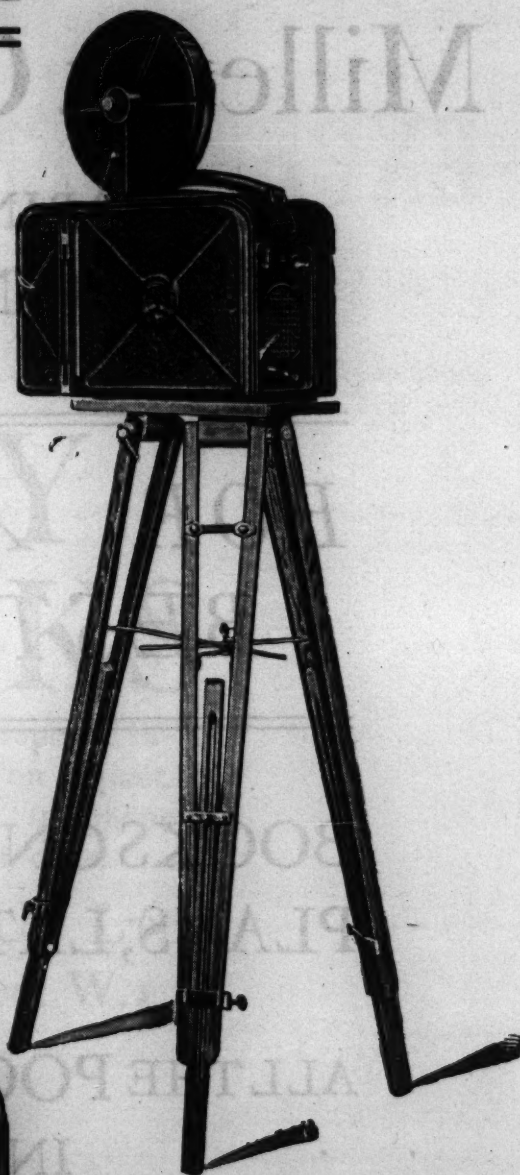
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